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Summary record of the 1st meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 29 September 2003, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Belinga-Eboutou ..... (Cameroon)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

Statement by the Chairman

1 **The Chairman**, having paid a tribute to the memory of Mr. Vieira de Mello, United Nations Commissioner for Human Rights and Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, killed on 19 August 2003 in the attack on the United Nations office in Baghdad, and having invited members the Committee to observe a minute's silence, said that all members were united in the same humanist ideal, that of freeing mankind from all fear, including the fear of violence and war, and from all hunger, including the hunger for liberty and rights, the right to development among them. In the present world situation, where the human condition itself was under threat, the Third Committee's task was more central than ever. For all its undeniable achievements to date, the United Nations still had not succeeded in speaking in one voice on matters of vital importance. The urgency of arriving at a true contract of international solidarity, founded upon justice and focused on man viewed not as an abstraction but as a being of flesh and blood, could not be over-emphasized.

Election of Vice-Chairpersons and of the Rapporteur

2 **The Chairman**, inviting the Committee to elect its three Vice-Chairpersons and its Rapporteur, announced that the Group of Eastern European States, the Group of Western European and other States and the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States had, respectively, proposed Mr. Juraj Priputen (Slovakia), Mr. Michiel Maertens (Belgium) and Ms. Beatrice Londoño (Colombia) for the office of Vice-Chairperson.

3 *Mr. Priputen (Slovakia), Mr. Maertens (Belgium) and Ms. Londoño (Colombia) were elected Vice-Chairpersons by acclamation.*

4 **The Chairman** announced that the Group of Asian States had proposed Mr. Abdullah Eid Salman Al-Sulaiti (Qatar) for the office of Rapporteur.

5 *Mr. Al-Sulaiti (Qatar) was elected Rapporteur by acclamation.*

Organization of work (A/58/250, A/58/252, A/C.3/58/1, A/C.3/58/L.1 and A/C.3/58/L.1/Add.1)

6 **The Chairman** drew attention to Chapter II of the report of the General Committee (A/58/250) recommending certain guidelines with regard to the conduct of the Main Committees' work, such as punctuality, the length of statements, drafting of resolutions, biennialization or triennialization of reports, and matters concerning budgetary implications. Drawing specific attention to Section J of that Chapter, which reaffirmed that the Fifth Committee was the appropriate Main Committee entrusted with responsibility for administrative and budgetary matters, he announced that the letter from the President of the General Assembly concerning allocation of items to the Third Committee had been issued as document A/C.3/58/1.

7 In accordance with Annex I, paragraph 13 of General Assembly resolution 46/140, an informal meeting of the Third Committee had to be held immediately after the election of the Bureau in order to consider, on the basis of a draft prepared by the Secretariat, the programme of work of the Committee and other organizational aspects of the Committee's work, especially the status of documentation. In that connection, he drew attention to General Assembly resolution 50/206 C and subsequent resolutions concerning control and limitation of documentation.

The meeting was suspended at 10.45 a.m. and resumed at 10.55 a.m.

8 **The Chairman** said that the timetable agreed upon at the informal meeting should be respected as far as possible. At the same time, the need for flexibility in the light of unforeseen developments should also be taken into account. It was particularly important that resolutions which generally involved lengthy negotiations should be drafted by their principal sponsors as early as possible. Delegations initiating proposals for action were requested to advise the Secretary of the Committee so as to enable him to prepare a list of such initiatives for the benefit of all delegations wishing to participate in the negotiations at an early stage. With those comments, he took it that the Committee approved the programme of work contained in document A/C.3/58/L.1.

9 *It was so decided.*

10. **The Chairman** said that, in the absence of objections, he would take it that the Committee agreed to a time limit of 7 minutes for statements by individual delegations and 15 minutes for statements by spokesmen of groups of delegations, it being understood that the same time limit would apply to the Secretariat.

11. *It was so decided.*

12. **The Chairman** recalled that, according to General Assembly decision 34/401, the number of statements made by a delegation in the exercise of the right of reply at a given meeting should be limited to two per item, the first not exceeding five minutes and the second not exceeding 3 minutes. Where two meetings were scheduled for the same day, and where both meetings were devoted to the consideration of the same item, delegations should exercise their right of reply at the end of the day. Points of order should also be limited to five minutes. Delegations were requested to provide at least 30 copies of their statements for distribution to interpreters, precis-writers and DPI as well as 300 copies for room distribution. Delegations intending to speak were invited to inform the Secretary of the Committee as early as possible and should be prepared to speak early in the debate on the scheduled item. Delegations would be called upon to address the Committee on the day and in the order in which they appeared on the list of speakers. He hoped that all delegations would do their best to enable the Third Committee to complete its work on 21 November at the latest.

13. He took it that, in accordance with established practice, the Committee wished to invite certain Special Rapporteurs and Special Representatives to present their reports at the present session.

14. *It was so decided.*

15. **The Chairman** reminded members that the General Assembly had waived the quorum requirements for the start of meetings. It was his firm intention to call meetings to order at 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. sharp. He appealed to members to show respect for speakers by conducting their consultations outside the Committee room or, failing that, to exercise the greatest possible restraint.

16. **Mr. Roshdy** (Egypt), referring to rule 89 of the Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly, said that he understood the fourth sentence of that rule to mean that, if a part of a resolution was voted upon, the resolution as a whole was automatically put to the vote even if no delegation invoked the rule or requested that a vote be taken on the proposal or motion concerned. The rule in its present wording was not well suited to the work of the Third Committee, which at the preceding session had had to take 39 votes in order to adopt 23 resolutions. His delegation had felt obliged to request the Legal Service for an interpretation of the rule in question. It had already raised the issue the previous year, but its comments had not been reflected in the report of the Third Committee. Although it had reiterated those comments in plenary session on the occasion of the adoption of the report, its point of view had been incorrectly presented in the press release concerning the meeting. His delegation was now formally requesting a written legal interpretation of rule 89. Voting procedures must be clearly established. It was unacceptable that the Rules of Procedure should be applied on request and on an ad hoc basis.

17. **The Chairman** said that, while recognizing the importance of the issue raised by the representative of Egypt, he was not in a position to discuss the matter at the present meeting. He therefore proposed to defer the question on the understanding that it would be considered before the Committee embarked on the consideration of draft resolutions.

The meeting rose at 11.10 a.m.